

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 SSM-03 ACDA-12 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6041
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT POUCH
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EG, IS, UR, US, XF, SOPN
SUBJECT: MOSCOW ASSESSES ISMALIA TALKS, TAKES A HARDER LINE

SUMMARY: THE SOVIET PRESS HAS IN RECENT DAYS MOUNTED AN INCREASINGLY ACERBIC ATTACK ON EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI TALKS, CONDEMNING ISRAELI OBDURACY, U.S. COMPLICITY, AND EGYPTIAN BETRAYAL OF ARAB INTERESTS. TAKING ITS CUES FROM BREZHNEV'S DECEMBER 24 PRAVDA INTERVIEW, SOVIET PROPAGANDA IS EMPHASIZING THE NEED FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL TERRITORY SEIZED IN 1967 AND FOR RECOGNITION OF FULL PALESTINIAN RIGHTS. THERE IS SOME SUGGESTION IN SOVIET
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PRESS THAT ISRAELI DEMANDS WILL CAUSE NEGOTIATIONS TO FAIL, AND PRAVDA OF DECEMBER 27 CALLS FOR UNITY OF ALL ARABS AND THEIR FRIENDS IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT A JUST SETTLEMENT TO THE MIDDLE EAST. END SUMMARY.

1. BREZHNEV HAS SET THE COURSE FOR SOVIET PROPAGANDA ON THE MIDDLE EAST WITH HIS PRAVDA INTERVIEW OF

DECEMBER 24. SUBSEQUENT TO THIS INTERVIEW THE SOVIET PRESS HAS BECOME NOTABLY MORE OUTSPOKEN IN ITS CRITICISM OF EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI TALKS AND OF ALLEGED U.S. FULL SUPPORT FOR "HARSH" ISRAELI DEMANDS. PRAVDA'S SUNDAY INTERNATIONAL WEEK COLUMN BY MAI PODKLYUCHNIKOV LAUNCHED A THEME, WHICH HAS BEEN ELABORATED UPON SUBSEQUENTLY, TO THE EFFECT THAT ISRAEL HAS ACTUALLY HARDENED ITS POSITION AS A RESULT OF HAVING BEEN ABLE TO DISRUPT PREPARATIONS FOR GENEVA. NOW, ACCORDING TO PODKLYUCHNIKOV, ISRAEL IS FORCING (WITH U.S. SUPPORT) THE CONCLUSION OF A SEPARATE AGREEMENT WITH CAIRO "ON ITS OWN TERMS."

2. SUBSEQUENT REPORTING HAS ELABORATED ON THIS. MOSEYEV IN IZVESTIYA ON DECEMBER 26 WROTE THAT BEGIN CAME TO EGYPT TO DICTATE TERMS FOR A SETTLEMENT WHICH, AS PRAVDA CORRESPONDENT VASILIEV ALSO REPORTED ON DECEMBER 27, WAS INTENDED TO SANCTION ISRAELI TERRITORIAL EXPANSION. EGYPTIAN WILLINGNESS TO NEGOTIATE, ACCORDING TO VASILIEV, HAS BEEN TAKEN IN TEL AVIV AS A SIGN OF WEAKNESS. SADAT IS NOW ROUTINELY ACCUSED IN SOVIET PRESS ACCOUNTS OF SEEKING TO REACH A SEPARATE DEAL WITH ISRAEL. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, MOSEYEV AND VASILIEV HAVE BOTH SUGGESTED THAT ISRAELI DEMANDS ARE TOO EXTENSIVE EVEN FOR SADAT, AND THAT THE ONLY SUBSTANTIVE OUTCOME LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE ISMALIA TALKS HAS BEEN THE CREATION OF JOINT POLITICAL AND MILITARY COMMITTEES.

3. BREZHNEV'S PRAVDA INTERVIEW HAS ALSO PROVIDED THE PEG FOR RENEWED EMPHASIS ON THE NEED TO RECONVENE THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, FOR PODKLYUCHNIKOV'S WARNING THAT MOSCOW WILL NOT BE A PARTY TO USING GENEVA TO RATIFY A SEPARATE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN DEAL, AND FOR VASILIEV'S CONCLUDING CALL FOR COORDINATION OF ACTION OF ALL ARAB COUNTRIES "IN COOPERATION WITH THEIR ALLIES" AS THE BASIS FOR ACHIEVING A JUST SETTLEMENT.

4. COMMENT: THE MOST STRIKING ASPECTS OF SOVIET COMMENTARY IN RECENT DAYS ARE THE INTENSIFICATION OF ATTACKS ON A SEPARATE DEAL, AND THE COMPLETE IDENTIFICATION OF THE U.S. WITH ISRAELI PLANS TO FORCE AN UNJUST PEACE ON THE ARABS. AT THIS POINT MOSCOW SEEMS TO HOPE THAT THE IMPACT OF BREZHNEV'S REITERATION OF SOVIET TERMS FOR A GENERAL MIDDLE EASTERN SETTLEMENT WILL GIVE NEW IMPETUS TO MOSCOW'S DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO REFOCUS ATTENTION ON GENEVA

AND TO KEEP THE ARABS FROM SPLINTERING FURTHER OVER
THE SADAT INITIATIVES.
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